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COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH
THE HOST COUNTRY

LETTER DATED 8 JANUARY 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH THE HOST COUNTRY

I have the honour to request that the attached note verbale dated 31 December 1996 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Office of Foreign Missions of the United States Department of State be circulated as an official document of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country at its next meeting, on Thursday, 9 January 1997.

(Signed) Alyaksandr SYCHOU
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Belarus
to the United Nations

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ANNEX

Note verbale dated 31 December 1996 from the Permanent Mission of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Office of Foreign Missions of the United States Department of State

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Office of Foreign Missions of the United States Department of State and has the honour to inform it about the following.

On 29 December 1996, at 2.30 p.m., Mr. Yuri N. Orange, First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Belarus to the United Nations, Mr. Boris V. Obnossov, First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, and Mr. S. M. Masyukov, staff member of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, accompanied by their wives, stopped for lunch at a Chinese restaurant located in New York City on Amsterdam Avenue between 81st and 82nd Streets. After lunch, at about 4 p.m., the wives of the above-mentioned persons left with Mr. Masyukov in his car. Mr. Boris Obnossov and Mr. Yuri Orange proceeded to Mr. Obnossov's car (diplomatic license plate No. 133 YRD) parked on the corner of 80th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. After they had sat in the car, two police officers accosted the vehicle, one of them filling out a violation ticket. In response to Mr. Obnossov's question as to what the violation had been, one of the police officers demanded his driver licence which was immediately produced. Without paying attention to the diplomatic identifications, police officers Finnerty and Gaine started dragging Mr. Yuri Orange and Mr. Boris Obnossov out of the car by force. While doing so, one of the police officers broke Mr. Obnossov's arm, broke his glasses and tore his clothes. Both diplomats were handcuffed despite the complete lack of resistance on their part and their diplomatic identification cards that had been produced.

Subsequently, Mr. Orange and Mr. Obnossov were taken to the 20th Police Precinct where a procedure to confirm their diplomatic status was completed within 30 minutes. After that the handcuffs were removed and a conversation with Captain James A. Clark of the Precinct took place. During the conversation, despite the diplomat's legitimate demands for an explanation, the Captain failed to give any plausible version of what had happened. Nor did he offer apologies for the unacceptable brutality.

At about 6 p.m. the diplomats left the Precinct, after which Boris V. Obnossov was taken to Lenox Hill Hospital, where he was treated for a fracture and his arm was put in plaster.

Mr. Orange arrived at the living compound in a depressed moral condition.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations holds as absolutely inadmissible the action of the police officers - representatives of United States official authorities - against the Belarus diplomat. In fact, what has happened is an attack on a person enjoying diplomatic immunity and protection, which represents a violation of international law and, as we understand, relevant United States legislation.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations expects from the United States authorities a thorough investigation of the incident, official explanations and apologies, and disciplinary action against the culprits.